

ANNEX M

PUBLIC INFORMATION

A. PURPOSE

The protection of life and property is facilitated when the public is well informed during and after an emergency or disaster situation. This annex addresses public information activities relative to emergency situations and assigns State responsibilities for coordination of the flow of vital information to the public.

B. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. Timely and accurate delivery of information on emergency and recovery operations is the responsibility of government officials at the appropriate level.

- a. When only local resources are committed, the highest elected community official or his/her designated Public Information Officer is responsible for dissemination of public information.
- b. In any situation requiring commitment of State resources, State officials are responsible for disbursing information concerning state actions.

(1) State field personnel coordinate news releases with their respective agency.

(2) When a situation exists that requires action by multiple state agencies/departments, activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and/or implementation of the WV Emergency Operations Plan; all State Public information efforts are coordinated through the Governor's Office Communications Division.

2. When Federal agency resources are utilized., the designated Federal Public Affairs/Information Officer provides information on Federal activity.

- a. The Federal Public Affairs/Information Officer coordinates public information activities with the appropriate state and local public information representatives.
- b. In the event of a Presidential Declaration, all Federal agency public affairs/information activities are coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Affairs/Information Officer assigned to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO).

c. Under a Presidential Declaration, all public information activities related to Federal programs administered or managed by State agencies/departments are coordinated through the FEMA Public Affairs/ Information Officer.

3. Public information on Federal/State forms of assistance also includes consumer protection material to inform the public of possible frauds or unethical practices that may be attempted and recommend steps to take to assure consumer protection.

4. The Joint Information Center (JIC) coordinates all needed emergency information between the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) and the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO).

C. TASK ASSIGNMENTS

1. State

a. The WV Office of Emergency Services (WVOES) assumes primary responsibility and coordination for public information matters when State action is required to deal with an emergency situation. This office:

(1) Provides information concerning:

(a) Emergency situation--including location, type of damage--and casualties;

(b) State action in response;

(c) State EOC activity;

(d) Assistance available to disaster victims.

b. In the event of a Presidential Declaration, the Governor's Office Communications Division:

(1) Provides support to coordinate public information efforts.

c. All State agencies/departments involved in the emergency/disaster operation, assistance and recovery efforts:

(1) Coordinates information with the Governor's Office Communication Division;

(2) Provides public information on their actions.

2. Federal

- a. When Federal agency resources are utilized, the designated Federal Public Affairs/Information Officer assumes primary responsibility for public information matters on Federal activities.
- b. In the event of a Presidential Declaration, the FEMA Public Affairs/Information Officer is assigned to the FCO to coordinate all Federal agency public information activities.

D. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

West Virginia Code, Chapter 15, Article 5, as amended